

## Current Trends in India-U.S. Relations: Hopes for a Secure Future

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### Introduction

India's relationship with the United States has always been the subject of debate and discussion. Despite being the world's largest democracy, India could never enjoy a smooth and non-controversial relationship with the world's oldest democracy—which means that sharing the same value system will not act as a glue to hold states together in the international politics. Until recently, India and the United States, due to their multifarious differences, were considered to be 'estranged democracies'—but their recent agreement on civil nuclear technology has transformed their relationship, and made them 'engaged democracies.'

The changing perception of the Bush administration about India's capabilities, and its desire for both states to work together for the maintenance of peace, security, and economic growth, has allowed India and the United States to move in the right direction for a better future. At this juncture, when India and the United States both are troubled by terrorism and nuclear proliferation concerns, the courting of India by the United States is also being seen as a strategy of balancing Chinese power and other axis-of-evil countries in Asia as well as consolidating India as a friendly country within the United States' designs of global partnership. How far this relationship will go is difficult to predict; however, in view of past experience, India would like to move cautiously. This paper attempts to discuss the intricacies of the upward movement of the two democracies, and their future prospects.

There are many implications of the visit of President Bush, the sixth U.S. presidential visit since India's independence, in March 2006 to India and Pakistan, the two main countries of the South Asia region, such as the Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal that was signed during the visit. The presidential visit, undertaken amidst tight security and hoards of protests, on the one hand reflected the anger of the people and the growing unpopularity of the policies of the sole superpower as a global policeman; but on the other, it opened a new chapter in the relationship between India, the United States, and Pakistan.

The focus of the presidential visit was to strengthen the strategic relationship between India and the United States for defeating terrorism; promoting democracy; improving economic ties, health, environment, and climate control; and nuclear energy co-operation. For Pakistan, it implied the

testing of its commitment to fight terrorism and its restoration of actual democracy with democratic rights and liberties. The success of the visit is evident in the fact that both India and the United States could agree on the modalities of a civil nuclear agreement, and in addition to signing this important agreement, they also decided to work jointly for the promotion of agriculture, expanding ties to foster trade, innovation, knowledge, and global security. Due to the importance attached to this visit, it is being viewed by India as the opening of an entirely a new chapter in the history of relations between India and the United States, reminiscent of the earlier opening in the 1970s between the United States and China.[1]

On the other hand, while praising President Musharaff for his role in tackling terrorism, and assuring him of the United States' cooperation, the U.S. rejection of the request by Pakistan for a similar type of nuclear agreement, highlighting that India and Pakistan share different historical records and also indirectly indicating that extremists could be defeated in the long run by freedom, democracy, prosperity, and better education, clearly shows that the equation between these three countries is changing. It also suggests that the United States, despite referring to Pakistan as the most important ally and President Musharraf as a buddy, is not happy with Pakistan's track record in promoting democracy or controlling terrorism. As can be assessed from the statement President Bush made during his Pakistan visit that Islamabad was a modern state that respected and believed in the role of Islam with which the United States did not have any problem, President Bush had come to Pakistan to see whether Musharraf was as committed to its war against terrorism and bringing terrorists to justice as before.[2] The United States' disenchantment with Pakistan indicates that it's just a matter of time before the future course of Pakistan's relations with the United States is decided.

## **Geopolitical Needs of the United States in South Asia**

An historic look at present U.S. policies toward India and Pakistan clearly indicates a shift in U.S. policy towards India, and this is not totally unprecedented. For a long time the United States has been following a policy of either favoring India or Pakistan, or tilting both ways[3]—depending on each president's attitude, personal equation, and also geopolitical necessities, which has always helped Pakistan on account of its location between the Persian Gulf and East Asia, enabling it to be considered as a way to defend West Asia since the cold war days. There had been periods when the United States also felt the need to develop close relations with India, but on almost all other occasions U.S. policy has shown a preference towards Pakistan due to its geography as well as its willingness to cooperate with the United States in all its ventures. The United States has been following this policy for the last five decades, and in accordance with its national interests and geopolitical considerations, it has promoted and extended its support to Pakistan. India received its much-desired support from the erstwhile Soviet Union to ward off her worries about economic, military, and diplomatic support. The superpower politics of taking sides in the subcontinent's affairs increased tensions and the hostility between India and Pakistan. With the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union, new warmth was seen in the Indo-U.S. relationship, as was a new coolness in U.S.-Pakistan relations.

The disappearance of the irritants of the cold war era—India's relations with the Soviet Union, non-alignment, and close Pakistan-U.S. relations—paved the way for a closer Indo-U.S. relationship and for developing a fresh understanding. In fact, the trend of coming closer to India had started during the second term of President Clinton, who during the Kargil War of 1999 not only pressured Pakistan to withdraw its troops from Kargil, but also chided Pakistan for its role in promoting terrorism. During his March 2000 trip to South Asia, the first undertaken by any U.S. president after a gap of twenty-two years, President Clinton, while expressing his appreciation for India's democracy, in no uncertain terms expressed his displeasure with military rule in Pakistan by not meeting President Musharaff. Although India's refusal to sign the NPT and CTBT, nuclear testing in 1998, and the Kashmir issue had been a cause for India's deplorable relations with the United States during much of the Clinton Presidency, resulting in a call for sanctions by the United States, the phase of understanding one another's outlook had also started to take shape.

The NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government led by the BJP (Bhartiya Janta Party), sensing the changing times and the importance of good relations with the United States, initiated steps to engage in talks for controlling the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The many rounds of talks held between Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbott stand as testimony of these initiatives.

During its first term, the Bush Administration had also indicated its desire for developing closer relations with India, especially the present U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, the then-National Security Adviser, had indicated this very clearly. The United States began to see India as an answer to some of the problems related to maintaining the balance of power in the Asian region, and not as a continued bothersome entity. From the beginning, the Bush administration aspired to develop a plan of action to stimulate U.S.-Indian ties, and decided to stop pestering India about its nuclear program.

The United States also started military cooperation and joint exercises with the three wings of the Indian Defense Forces, which is considered an important, and normal, aspect of a relationship between friendly countries. Military cooperation indicates that both are developing an understanding as well as the capability to work together effectively. India, by not insisting on the solidarity of the Third World or non-alignment, and adopting some pro-Western policy moves, exhibited its willingness to enter into a positive relationship with the United States and the West. By this time, Indian migrants in the United States who had acquired places of importance in scientific, business, and academic circles—and some in political circles—with their hard work, dedication, and devotion, had also started to play an important role in changing the attitudes and perceptions of America towards India and the Indians.

India also had taken various steps to liberalize its economy, integrate it with the global economy, and indicated through various policy moves that it supports the U.S. line of action. India presently is on the way to becoming the third largest economy in the world after China and the United States. With a growth rate of 8.1 percent; foreign reserves of over \$100 billion; and growth in exports of manufactured goods, software, and competency in IT services; India, with a large number of English-speaking people and a fast-growing middle class, has emerged as a major consumer market for U.S. companies, and its cheap labor has also become an added source of attraction for big American companies. The United States, in the 1990s, had already accepted that India was one of the 10 most rapidly emerging markets of the world.

Moreover, India, by adopting new foreign policy moves like dropping its anti-Western paranoia, and establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel, not only got an important and dependable ally in the Middle East, and assurance from Israel for the supply of high technology like Arrow missiles, but this move also signaled to the Arab world that India could no longer be taken for granted or blackmailed for its energy-related needs. After a long dilly-dallying in adopting a clear policy towards Israel, India's decision to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel, by reversing its earlier policy, indicated its desire to go with the U.S. policy of supporting and considering Israel as an ally in the West Asia.

Besides realizing the importance of peaceful relations with neighboring countries, and expanding its economy, India also took important steps toward improving its relationship with China, and started economic and trade relations by putting the demand for the resolution of its boundary dispute on the back-burner. Successful attempts to open border trade, which was suspended since the 1962 Indo-China war, through a few border posts in Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, and also through Nathu La Pass linking Tibet with Aurnachal Pradesh, have been made. The movement of India and China in a positive direction toward expanding their relationship, despite the unsettled boundary dispute, is an example of their matured diplomacy. India has also embarked upon a look-east policy towards ASEAN to gain access to their markets, and also to counter the growth of Chinese political and military influence in this region. During the cold war, under the influence of Nehruvian idealism, India had ignored these states as dictatorial regimes dependent on American security assistance, and rejected the offer of membership in ASEAN

made in the 1960s. Presently, although India is not a formal member of the organization, it has become a full dialogue partner. Such policy moves present India as a country with growing understanding for the finer points, a practical and realistic approach to foreign relations, as well as a nation with a capacity for handling partnerships.

## **9/11 and South Asia Policies of Bush Administration**

President Bush, during his first term, continued the policies of displeasure and distance initiated by the Clinton Administration towards Pakistan by demoting it from the category of an ally to that of a rogue state because of its military dictatorship, support of the Taliban in Afghanistan, involvement in cross-border terrorism, acquiring nuclear and ballistic missiles from China and North Korea, and its suspected role in supplying these to other countries. But 9/11 and the U.S. war against terrorism and Al Qaeda forced the United States to reexamine its policies toward Pakistan because of Pakistan's geographical proximity to Afghanistan, and the extensive links which it had developed with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Pakistan, keeping in view the U.S. annoyance with its activities, to avoid any adverse action decided to extend its support to the U.S. war on terrorism in response to the U.S. declaration "either you are with us or against us in the war against terrorism." India, which had already indicated its desire to go with the United States by supporting the U.S. resolution of going for a missile defense system plan even before its closest strategic allies backed it, by not opposing the U.S. abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty despite worldwide opposition, endorsing the U.S. position on climate change, and offering unconditional support and military bases for the U.S. war in Afghanistan after 9/11,<sup>[4]</sup> was not found suitable—and Pakistan, on account of its geographical closeness with Afghanistan, became a valuable ally in this war.

This saw a new phase of a closer Pakistan-U.S. relationship, and a low time for India-U.S. relations. India was irritated that despite being a democracy and adopting pro- United States policies, the full United States' attention to, and support of, its war against cross-border terrorism was being denied to it. This also witnessed a new wave of tensions between India and Pakistan, and a surge of terrorist activities in India. War clouds hovered over South Asia, with both India and Pakistan accusing one another and massing their armies on the border. In view of the nuclear capability of both the countries, the United States put pressure on both to diffuse the tensions and start a dialogue to resolve their disputes. India felt humiliated and disillusioned by the U.S. stand, and relations with the United States did not move further. India was worried, and dejected with the United States, because it was neither doing anything to discipline Pakistan, nor supporting India's candidacy for the permanent seat on the UN Security Council; rather, it gave Pakistan the status of the Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNNA). India also became apprehensive about the U.S. decision to deliver F-16s to Pakistan, which can carry nuclear weapons. India also did not appreciate the soft policies of the United States toward Pakistan, overlooking Pakistan's role in cross-border terrorism, nuclear proliferation, pressure tactics for negotiations, and meddling in the region. There were differences between India and the United States in the nuclear proliferation issue, transfer of high technology, U.S. policy towards Kashmir, and terrorism. Despite the convergence of interests of India and the United States, the geopolitical needs of the United States obstructed the kind of closeness which should be natural among the democracies.

## **Balancing Act and Expanding Partnership**

An analysis of U.S. policy makes it very clear that the United States' policy towards South Asia and particularly India and Pakistan has never been consistent because of its ever changing interests. Therefore, whenever Pakistan was required for the furtherance of its national interests, U.S. policy was found tilting in Pakistan's favor, on some occasions it adopted the neutral stance, and a few times a policy of tilting both ways. Presently the United States wants to court both India and Pakistan simultaneously due to different reasons; therefore, it's following the policy of tilting both ways. Due to this, for the first time the United States' policies are not making the other party

nervous because if F-16s are being provided to Pakistan, and the United States has also offered to sell F-18s to India and is seeking close relations with India also.

The U.S. policy of wooing both India and Pakistan also satisfies U.S. business and economic interests. In fact, working together with India and Pakistan and changing the perception of its pro-Pakistan prejudice has been the Bush Administration's top priorities, and to some extent the United States has been successful in working toward this goal by tilting both ways, and by prodding India and Pakistan to normalize relations. In accordance to this policy, while Pakistan is being patronized as a most important ally in its war against terrorism, the United States has also expressed its desire to help India emerge as a major global power in the 21st century so that the United States and India could act together as partners for global peace and security through the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP). India also seems to have accepted the reality that U.S. interests would not allow it either to adopt tough policy measures or to isolate Pakistan; therefore, it would be pointless to complain about its pro-Pakistan bias rather than playing a global role, earning respect as a responsible country, and sustaining the economic growth. As such, it would be in India's interest to have normal and peaceful relations with Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister, Man Mohan Singh, has many times repeated that India and Pakistan should move forward from their history, and do something new to improve their relationship. The recent offer of a treaty of peace and friendship with Pakistan<sup>[5]</sup> by the Indian Prime Minister is not only timely and in accordance with these changing times and reflects positivism, but also indicates that it's high time to get rid of the politics of hate and rhetoric. This suits the United States' interests as well, as normal relations and peace between India and Pakistan would let the United States concentrate on more pressing needs, advance its interests in Asia, and play a balancing role. The present convergence of interests between India and the United States, India's growing power stature, and the United States' desire for India to play a partnership role, also requires India to behave in a rational manner, and while looking after its security interests, to move beyond the Pakistan-fixation of its foreign policy.

In view of India's growing place within the United States' calculations and changing perceptions, the recent civil nuclear agreement with India is being seen as a step in right direction. The nuclear agreement is important due to the fact that the goal of the U.S. foreign policy—developing global partnerships to meet the challenges of globalization, radical Islam, and terrorism—cannot be achieved without the support and cooperation of some strong countries. Therefore, it wants other countries to also become strong. India is viewed as one such country with which the United States could develop a global partnership. To successfully carry forth this objective, Richard Haas<sup>[6]</sup> has suggested a doctrine of integration for U.S. foreign policy with three dimensional goals: to create a cooperative relationship among the world's major powers, built on a common commitment to promote certain principles and outcomes; and developing effective arrangements and actions and to bring in other countries, organizations, and peoples to enjoy the benefits of physical security, economic opportunity, and political freedom. In Haas' opinion the integrated world, of many governments and organizations and societies, would be helpful in meeting the challenges of the modern era. In view of this theory, it could be said that the United States is keen to see India's integration and consolidation with the global order, so that it could extend its help in countering the challenges of terrorism, proliferation of nuclear weapons, and promotion of democracy. As no two countries other than India and the United States are threatened by terrorism, religious extremism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the rise of China; therefore the integration of India as a friendly nuclear weapons state into the evolving global non-proliferation regime is being considered as a most appropriate move by the United States' foreign policy in the new era.

Closer relations with India would also permit the United States to ask India to share some of its burdens in Asia, and to work for maintaining a balance of power in this region. As Henry Kissinger<sup>[7]</sup>, while appreciating and supporting the nuclear deal with India, has also pointed out, in a period of terrorism and a potential clash of civilizations, both India and the United States have parallel objectives in defeating radical Islam. He feels that the spread of the restlessness of

radical Islam is dangerous for India as well, which is home to over 150 million Muslims, and that the United States is fighting some of India's battles. He has also accepted that the United States' relationship with Pakistan is a special case, but that the United States needs to balance the role of Pakistan in the war against terrorism in view of the emerging partnership with India. However, the current moves of the United States policy towards India and Pakistan clearly show that United States is neither pro-Pakistan nor pro-India, but it has always been pro-America and it only works for the furtherance of its national interests.

Hence, the question of fighting India's battle does not arise at all, as India has been fighting the war against cross border terrorism for a long time, but the United States, following the policy of 'my terrorist' and 'your terrorist,' never felt the necessity of doing something about India's war against terrorism that's being aided and abetted by Pakistan. 9/11 was a humbling experience, and allowed the United States to understand that terrorism does not belong to a country or region, but that it is the enemy of the mankind, and therefore needs to be dealt with through a global partnership and approach. Yet, despite this realization, whatever is being done by the United States in the name of the war against terrorism is totally in accordance to its national interests, and to advance its own global agenda, it wants to develop a global partnership by involving other countries.

In South Asia presently, U.S. interests demand friendly relations with both India and Pakistan, therefore the United States aspires to court both India and Pakistan so that both can be used according to its interests. Under such compulsions, while trying to advance its agenda the United States would naturally like to ignore the interests of the other countries. This could be understood from the United States' pressures on India and Pakistan to withdraw from the Iran-India-Pakistan Gas pipeline project just because of its apprehension that it would encourage Iran to pursue its nefarious designs, despite knowing that this deal is essential for India to maintain its economic growth and to satisfy its energy needs and for Pakistan to make money to ease some of its economic problems as well as to try peace with India. In view of this, it would be worthwhile to mention that the current goodwill towards India is not out of any sudden love for India, but the result of the perception of the "neocons" of the Bush administration that see alliance with India as a key to maintaining balance in this region, and also for checking the undesirable moves of Iran and China in the long run.

Although the United States has denied that a closer relationship with India is directed toward any country or region, and India also does not favor participation in any such triangular or bilateral alliances, a large number of scholars believes that the United States is moving towards India because it has China in mind, and that India also has the similar interests. The intolerance of any emerging power bloc capable of challenging the United States' interests and power in any region of the world has also encouraged the United States to develop good relations with India. The United States has still not abandoned its policy of searching for such allies which could be helpful in promoting its interests. In view of India's economic growth and military capability, the United States has started to see India as a global partner in dealing with future threats emanating primarily from China, terrorism, and the Axis-of-Evil countries.

## **Convergence of Interests and Changing Perceptions**

Presently the similarity of threat-perception—of terrorism, religious fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and the desire to develop close cooperation with India to confront challenges to peace and security—has allowed India and the United States, the two democracies, to keep their differences aside and walk together toward a better relationship. The Bush administration's policies of favoring democracies—acknowledging India as a rising power, a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology—has provided a new outlook for the India-U.S. relationship in this new era.



Sharing common interests such as tackling terrorism, promoting peace and security, and supporting democracy and its value system, gives the two nations common ground to become close allies in the post-9/11 era. This marks a stark change in the United States' perception of India's capabilities; therefore, the United States wants to make India not a regional ally, but a global partner, so that India may also be involved in advancing the United States' global agenda. It is interesting to note that India has always been a democracy, but India's democracy never became a bond for a strong relationship between the United States and India; rather, the United States preferred military dictatorships, but presently due to the change in its priorities, the United States has found in India a natural ally. It also shows that for the United States, there are no permanent allies and enemies, as only national interests matter. Therefore, India is being preferred and courted just as China was in the 1970s due to the geopolitical and balance-of-power needs of the United States. India's democratic traditions, political institutions, economic resurgence, and its huge business and market potential, have all impressed the United States and its perception of India has now largely become favorable.

In view of this, it is not difficult to understand that the present phase of close relations with India is not driven by goodwill, but purely business and politico-security interests that have facilitated the process of coming closer. For India, too, its relationship with the United States is important due to its changing economic, scientific, military, diplomatic, and to some extent political, needs. The United States also wishes to gain access to the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf, which is possible only with the collaboration and cooperation of India. America, therefore, feels that it is in its interests to convert India into a powerful regional force, which has also been a long cherished dream of India, and suits her very much. With this convergence of interests, both the United States and India have tended to become supportive of each other. Moreover, the attitude of the Indian people towards America is also becoming favorable and friendlier. Indeed, the statesmen and politicians have stopped referring to the famous 'foreign hand' as the source of India's woes in the domestic and external arena.

In fact, after a long period of anti-Americanism in India, a gradual change in public opinion towards America is also being witnessed. This fact was highlighted in a recent opinion poll by Outlook magazine in its March 6, 2006 issue. Among the lower-middle class and higher economic strata in nine cities of India, the survey found that:

- 66 percent of respondents believe that President George W. Bush was a friend of India.
- 50 percent believe that America is closer to Pakistan than to India.
- 49 percent believe that the United States has not extended enough help to India in fighting terrorism.
- 55 percent believe that India can trust the United States for support in times of need.
- 72 percent believe that the United States is a global bully.
- 59 percent believe India has compromised on its foreign policy by getting too close to America.
- However, 46 percent opined that they love the United States.
- 74 percent believe India should develop close ties with the United States on trade and business issues.
- 51 percent approve of India's two pro- United States votes against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency because they believed that it was necessary for improving relations with the United States.
- But 64 percent want India to ignore America's objection and pursue the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline for fulfilling India's energy needs.

A survey by the United States-based Pew Research Centre in June 2005 also confirmed that India's middle-class strongly favors the United States as 71 percent in this all-urban India sample had a favorable opinion of America. It was the highest proportion among the 16 countries surveyed, as only 41 to 45 percent of respondents in most Western European countries held such

a favorable opinion. In China, only 42 percent view America favorably, and in Pakistan this drops to 23 percent.<sup>[8]</sup> This reflects a massive change in the perception of the Indian public towards the United States. The credit for taking positive initiatives, and providing the momentum to start the process of close relations with the United States, goes to the BJP-led coalition government (NDA) by Atal Bihari Bajpayee, who despite the various differences believes that being natural allies, a close relationship between India and the United States is imperative. He also saw close ties with the United States as a means to end India's long economic, military, diplomatic, and scientific isolation.

## Nuclear Deal

India and the United States also had extensive dialogues on the nuclear issue during the period of the NDA government in India because the United States aspired to stop, cap, and roll back India's nuclear program. But when this did not happen, relations became strained. But President Bush, in accordance with his policy of developing close relations with India, preferred to avoid pressurizing India for this, and to instead adopt other methods to bring India under the nuclear regimes. The nuclear agreement initiated during Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh's visit to the United States in July 2005, and finalized during President Bush's visit to India in March 2006, is exceptional as it is with a country which has not signed the NPT, and U.S. law prohibits entering into agreements with countries that have not signed the NPT, and that refuse to follow the guidelines of the IAEA.

This has historically been one of the factors resulting in India's problematic relations with the United States. In fact, India has most of the time been subjected to the United States' sanctions and consequent denial of high technology because of its nuclear program, and its decision to remain out of the NPT. As India has developed most of its nuclear program indigenously, therefore, India has always opposed the IAEA guidelines on nuclear safeguard, control, and inspection systems in its nuclear plants. Being a non-signatory to the NPT, India lacked access to the IAE trade, and found it difficult to get the supplies needed for running its nuclear plants which have always been very crucial for India's energy needs.

Under the new civil nuclear agreement, India has agreed to separate its civilian and military programs and to put two-thirds of its existing reactors, and 65 percent of its generating power, under permanent safeguards with international verification, and in return the United States will supply nuclear fuel and technology to India. This is very vital for India, because one of the biggest constraints of the continuing success of its fast-growing economy is electricity shortages. Nuclear energy, which at present accounts for only about 3 percent of India's total electricity generation, is an attractive alternative to coal and expensive imported oil and gas. India has therefore perceived the agreement as a means of fulfilling its energy needs, and the United States, on the other, hand has been viewing it as a tool to bring India under the obligations of the nuclear regimes. In view of India's energy-related problems, this agreement appears to have transformed their relationship; on the one hand, it would end India's isolation, help it acquire high technology, and reduce its dependence on oil from Persian Gulf; and on the other, it would bring India under the IAEA inspection and control system, and prove economically beneficial for the United States, too.

Interestingly, the United States now acknowledges India as a responsible state with advanced nuclear know-how, but it has very diplomatically avoided accepting India as the sixth nuclear weapon state. This also makes the nuclear deal noteworthy. America has agreed to help India acquire the same benefits and advantages as other states with nuclear weapons: India is to be granted full civil nuclear energy co-operation, such as fuel supplies and the transfer of technology.

The argument which is being made in support of this deal by the Bush administration is also quite fascinating. The U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in a recent article,<sup>[9]</sup> has given several for this agreement. She has stressed that India has a record of thirty years of responsible



behavior on proliferation matters, and the agreement would make the world, and the future of India and the United States, safe. She has argued that India is a unique country, and therefore this agreement is also unique, as India is a democracy, with its government acting with transparency and accountability. She has stressed that other countries like North Korea and Iran who may also seek to develop their programs on the basis of this agreement do not fall in this category, because Iran is a state that promotes terrorism, and North Korea is the least transparent state, threatens its neighbors, and proliferates weapons. She has also argued that by satisfying India's energy needs, it would end its dependence on fossil fuels and ease the environmental impact of India's vibrant economic growth; and, on the other hand, it would also help the U.S. economy and enhance the employment and job prospects of the American people.

## Issues of Concern

There is no denying that this agreement has opened new vistas of cooperation between India and the United States, but it cannot be denied that despite the hoopla, the pin-pricks and pressure politics are still present. The U.S. objections regarding the supply of nuclear fuel by Russia to India's Tarapur nuclear reactor is a cause of concern. The United States feels that any action should be taken only after India fulfills its obligations under the historic Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, which India has not done. India, on the other hand, has made it clear that nuclear fuel was required urgently to prevent shutting down the Tarapur plant, and that it did not violate any NSG guidelines or international law. India has also clarified that it had requested the United States to supply nuclear fuel, but as this is not possible under U.S. law, it requested this of Russia, which agreed—and that this issue was separate from the Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear deal.<sup>[10]</sup> In view of this, it seems that in order to pursue its civil nuclear-related interests, India would have to accommodate the United States' pressures, and without the United States' consent, it would be difficult for India to get such supplies from other nuclear powers.

Many critics of this agreement, both in the United States and India, have expressed their apprehensions about it. They feel that India may not have signed the NPT, but that the United States—by signing the NPT—had also promised not to help other countries, and only those countries who have signed it could benefit from trade in civilian nuclear technology, and that allowing nuclear trade with India is bound to break this rule.<sup>[11]</sup> It is also felt in some quarters in America that this agreement is more favorable to India and its military program than to the United States, as this deal allows India enough fissile material for producing nuclear weapons. They feel that this would be against America's worldwide nuclear non-proliferation agenda. In some segments of India as well, there is a feeling that the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government, in its enthusiasm to develop good relations and a nuclear deal with the United States, has compromised India's interests. Although India has been able to keep its military option open, it will now be under the constant pressures and vigilance of the international agencies, and in view of the past record of the United States with regard to such supplies, India would have to work with utmost caution.

The practical problem with this nuclear deal, which is being viewed as a win-win situation for both parties, is that without the approval of the U.S. Congress, it would be impossible for the United States to fulfill its obligations. But for the Bush administration to get the approval of Congress is a difficult task. Apprehensions have already started to find their expression among members of the Congress, many of whom think that this deal is more in India's interest as India would be able to develop its military program without any problems, as India's prototype fast breeder reactors, which can produce significant amounts of weapons-grade plutonium, have been kept out of this agreement.<sup>[12]</sup> There are also apprehensions that the deal would also encourage other countries to develop their nuclear programs, and this would harm the United States' vital interest of preventing nuclear proliferation, lead to the spread of weapons-grade nuclear material, and also unleash a regional arms race in which China and Russia could be expected to do the same for Pakistan and Iran as the United States does for India. In such an atmosphere, it would be difficult for the United States to get support for sanctions against the countries known as nuclear rebels,

such as Iran and North Korea.<sup>[13]</sup> Another apprehension is that the United States' failure at the recent NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group) consultative group's meeting at Vienna to get the issue of allowing India to buy the nuclear technology from the world market included on its agenda for the Rio de Janeiro plenary session to be held in May, would make it difficult for the United States to convince the forty-five nation NSG, and particularly China and Japan, to change their policies to exempt India from nuclear export controls.<sup>[14]</sup> This failure could also make the attitudes in Congress both hard and difficult.

U.S. objections to India's search for alternative energies are also noteworthy, as the United States wants to restrict India's attempts to develop the India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline. The United States believes that the nuclear deal will end India's dependence on the oil from Persian Gulf; however, despite being the pioneer in a field of nuclear energy, the United States is equally interested in maintaining a continued and unhindered flow of oil from the Persian Gulf for satisfying its own needs, which means the United States is free to look after its interests, but that India's hands would be tied. In view of this, it can be said that though the integration of India in the field of nuclear energy is a welcome move, that India needs to tread cautiously to protect its interests.

There are other issues of concern, such as the United States' relationship with Pakistan, its policy of not supporting India's candidacy for permanent membership on the UN Security Council, its policies toward Iraq and Iran, as well as pressures on India for supporting the United States' moves against Iran, and the like, which have the potential to cause the two countries to drift in different directions. Indeed, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's request for \$6.2 billion, in her testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on State Department's foreign operations budget, to strengthen America's GWOT coalition partners such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Kenya, and Jordan, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States in the fight against terrorism, is worrisome for India—especially as the highest amount proposed in this grant, \$739 million, has been allocated for Pakistan, far greater than the \$560 million requested for Colombia, the \$154 million for Indonesia, the \$457 million for Jordan, and the \$335 million for Kenya.<sup>[15]</sup> Keeping in view the past experience of such U.S. aid, and Pakistan's tendency of supporting cross-border terrorism, India's apprehensions are natural, and that despite the positive moves, the United States' policy of patronizing Pakistan is intact, giving Pakistan the latitude to continue its policy of creating problems for India—and this has the potential to damage the relationship between India and the United States.

## Conclusion

Although there are issues of concern that could, at any time, once again reverse the tide of the warming U.S.-India relationship, and make the whole exercise of the nuclear agreement, and forging closer relations, useless; hopes for a good relationship always underlie initiatives. The spirit of the move is undoubtedly noble, but its implementation is full of hurdles, and largely depends upon the United States. In view of the apprehensions being expressed by members of the Congress, and the rigid attitude of some members toward India, it is widely felt that securing the approval of the nuclear agreement will be difficult for the Bush administration.

In consideration of this prevailing atmosphere, and its complexities, the Bush administration has made it clear that if this treaty fails to get approval by Congress, it will be impossible to renegotiate it. In fact, the argument that this agreement is liable for killing the spirit of the NPT, is not valid—as North Korea, Pakistan, and China had been in the proliferation racket long before this deal was signed, and with full knowledge of the Nuclear 5. It was not India that encouraged the nuclear renegades, like Iran, to pursue their nuclear weapons programs despite signing the NPT. On the contrary, India has always supported the non-proliferation agenda, observed self-imposed restraints, and never indulged in its trade. India's vote with the United States against Iran's non-compliance of the NPT, despite domestic opposition, can be taken as an example of this. If this deal legalizes, and helps to sustain, democratic India's nuclear program, this would not

only be good for India's development and economic growth, but would also be in the interest of world peace and security.

Actually, with a biased set of policymakers and advisers mostly being governed by the closed mind set of the cold war in both India and the United States, no one believed that such a nuclear deal would happen one day, and that the two democracies could agree to work together. Such groups are shocked by this unprecedented, unimagined development, and the positive movement in the India-U.S. relationship, and therefore express their concerns in a manner markedly different from the present bonhomie. After so many years of an antagonistic relationship, the United States and India have found common ground to work with one another for the promotion of peace and security. As a consequence, these considerations should not be allowed to mar it.

However, in view of the dissimilarities between India and the United States with regard to their global power projections for protecting and enhancing their national interests, India needs to move forward cautiously. But nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that this is a major achievement for the India-U.S. relationship in the post-9/11 era, and certainly speaks for hope, and for a better future of cooperation between India and the United States.

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